

Application No. 10/609,162
Response to Office Action

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R E M A R K S

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

THE CLAIMS

The claims have been amended to avoid the term "plate-like" as required by the Examiner.

In addition, claims 2 and 8 have been amended to clarify the feature of the present invention whereby the plurality of projections are arranged continuously at least at each of two opposite widthwise ends of the material main body, which are opposite ends of the material main body along a width direction thereof. That is, the claims have been clarified to recite that the opposite widthwise ends (or "widthwise opposite ends" as used throughout the specification) are ends of the material main body in a width direction thereof. For example, see projections 33 and 34 at opposite widthwise ends of the protective film 31 in Fig. 1, as described in the specification at, for example, page 15, lines 12-15. In Fig. 1, the "opposite widthwise ends" are the top and bottom sides of the film 31, which extends from left-to-right.

Still further claim 8 has been amended to be rewritten in independent form to include the subject matter of claim 6, and to recite the features of the present invention whereby the first

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and second projections are grouped into pairs of projections, and each of the pairs includes of one of the first projections and one of the second projections adjacent to the one of the first projections, and whereby for each of the pairs of projections, the crown portions of the first projection and the second projection in a same pair have a same width along the direction in which the projections are arranged, which is different from a width, along the direction in which the projections are arranged, of the crown portions of an adjacent pair of projections. See, for example, Fig. 12 and the disclosure in the specification at page 30, line 15 to page 31, line 25.

Yet still further, claim 13 has been amended to depend from claim 2, and claim 22 has been amended to better accord with amended independent claim 2.

Finally, claim 25 has been amended to more positively recite the features thereof in better accordance with amended independent claim 2.

No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully requested that the amendments to the claims be approved and entered.

It is respectfully submitted, moreover, that the amended claims are in fully compliance with the requirements of 35 USC 112, second paragraph, and it is respectfully requested that the rejection thereunder be withdrawn.

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THE PRIOR ART REJECTION

Claims 2, 5, 6, 8 and 13-25 were rejected under 35 USC 103 as obvious in view of JP 02-206140 (previously cited "Okabe"), and claims 26 and 27 were rejected under 35 USC 103 as being obvious in view of the combination of Okabe and JP 2002-076064 ("Odaka"). These rejections, however, are respectfully traversed with respect to the claims as amended hereinabove.

According to the present invention as recited in clarified amended independent claims 2 and 8, a protective film is provided which comprises: a material main body which protects a material structure, and a plurality of projections which: (i) are arranged continuously at least at each of two opposite widthwise ends of the material main body, which are opposite ends of the material main body along a width direction thereof, and (ii) are formed by respective parts of the material main body to extend from a base portion of the material main body, and each of the projections comprises a crown portion having a surface that is a plane that is substantially parallel with a main surface of the protected material structure, and a side wall portion extending from the crown portion.

According to the present invention as recited in amended independent claim 2, moreover, an amount by which the projection provided at a first one of the opposite widthwise ends of the protective film is shifted with respect to a corresponding

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projection at a second one of the opposite widthwise ends is not smaller than 1/4 pitch and is not larger than 3/4 pitch.

And according to the present invention as recited in amended independent claim 8, the plurality of projections comprise first projections projecting from a first surface of the material main body, and second projections projecting from a second surface of the material main body, and the first and second projections are arranged alternately along a direction in which the projections are arranged. The first and second projections are grouped into pairs of projections, and each of the pairs includes of one of the first projections and one of the second projections adjacent to the one of the first projections. And for each of the pairs of projections, the crown portions of the first projection and the second projection in a same pair have a same width along the direction in which the projections are arranged, which is different from a width, along the direction in which the projections are arranged, of the crown portions of an adjacent pair of projections.

As explained in the specification at page 32, lines 3-14, when the pitches of the projections at the opposite widthwise ends are not different from each other, the crown portions of the projections lie opposite and are superimposed on each other via the protected tape-like structure. With this structure, if there

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is misalignment of the protective film, the crown portions can be misaligned and protect the material.

With the structure of the present invention as recited in amended independent claim 8, however, even if the crown portions are totally misaligned when the tape-like structure 21 and protective film 31 are wound, since at least some of the projections have different widths certain projections can be placed opposite each other and in contact with each other so as to avoid loosening the base film 22, and to inhibit tape misalignment from propagating down the tape. See the disclosure in the specification at 33, line 2 to page 35, line 9.

As explained in the specification at page 40, line 27 to page 41, line 24, providing a projection at a first one of the opposite widthwise ends of the protective film so as to be shifted with respect to a corresponding projection at a second one of the opposite widthwise ends by not less than 1/4 pitch and not more than 3/4 pitch, an effect similar to the effect provided by claim 8 is achieved.

In particular, as pointed out in the specification, the shifting should preferably not be less than 1/4 pitch or more than 3/4 pitch, in order to achieve the effects of claim 8 whereby the base film is not loosened. Otherwise, as explained in the specification the alignment of the projections resembles the one described above in which the crown portions of the

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projections lie opposite and are superimposed on each other via the protected tape-like structure.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the structural features of the present invention as recited in amended independent claims 2 and 8 provide unexpected advantageous effects, as described in the specification.

And it is respectfully submitted that neither Okabe nor Okada discloses, teaches or suggests the claimed structural features or advantageous effects of the present invention as recited in amended independent claims 2 and 8.

Indeed, the Examiner has acknowledged that Okabe does not disclose the feature recited in claim 2 whereby an amount by which the projection provided at a first one of the opposite widthwise ends of the protective film is shifted with respect to a corresponding projection at a second one of the opposite widthwise ends is not smaller than 1/4 pitch and is not larger than 3/4 pitch. And the Examiner has acknowledged that Okabe does not disclose crown portions having different widths in an arrangement direction of the projections, as recited in claim 8.

The Examiner has asserted, however, that both the shifting of claim 2 and different crown widths are obvious modifications of Okabe.

As explained hereinabove, however, the structural features of amended independent claim 2 and the structural features of

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amended independent claim 8 both result in an advantageous and unexpected effect that is clearly not suggested by the Okabe.

It is also respectfully pointed out that according to MPEP 2144.05(II)(B), the optimization of a parameter can only be said to be obvious as a matter of routine experimentation if the variable is recognized as being a "result-effective variable." Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner must show that shifting the projections at the widthwise ends of the tape of Okabe was known to achieve a recognized result before the Examiner can assert that it would have been an obvious optimization to modify Okabe to achieve the claimed shifting range of not less than 1/4 pitch and not more than 3/4 pitch.

In addition, it is respectfully pointed out that MPEP 2144.04(IV)(B), which the Examiner has cited to assert that projections having crown portions of different width would be obvious, only dismisses the "configuration" of an object as a matter of choice where the configuration is insignificant.

It is respectfully pointed out, however, that the difference in crown widths according to the present invention as recited in claim 8 does indeed produce a significant and advantageous effect, as explained above and in the specification of the present application. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that MPEP 2144.04(IV)(B) is not applicable.

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It is respectfully submitted, moreover, that even if one were to arbitrarily change the shapes of the crown portions of the projections of Okabe, the mere reconfiguration of shape would not hit upon the advantageous features of the present invention as recited in claim 8, whereby the first and second projections are grouped into pairs of projections, and each of the pairs includes of one of the first projections and one of the second projections adjacent to the one of the first projections; and whereby for each of the pairs of projections, the crown portions of the first projection and the second projection in a same pair have a same width along the direction in which the projections are arranged, which is different from a width, along the direction in which the projections are arranged, of the crown portions of an adjacent pair of projections.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention as recited in each of amended independent claims 2 and 8, as well as claims 5, 6 and 13-27 depending from claim 2, clearly patentably distinguishes over Okabe, taken singly or in combination with Odaka, under 35 USC 103.

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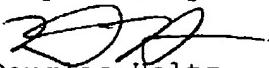
Entry of this Amendment, allowance of the claims and the passing of this application to issue are respectfully solicited.

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If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or recommendations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the telephone number given below for prompt action.

Respectfully submitted,



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